

## Downtown Plan / Main Street Program

### Description

Downtown plans and “Main Street” programs are similar in that they are plans with specific goals for specialized areas. Downtown plans refer generally to a type of plan that can be prepared by the local planning authority or a consultant. Using a range of approaches, Main Street Programs are more structured and are accredited by a national entity that reserves the right to the name Main Street as a protected brand. Both serve the community for a common goal, and are able to compliment each other in revitalizing the downtown area(s).

Problems evolving in many small community downtown's stem from a number of trends ranging from access and parking, changing roles of the downtown, and the phenomenon of big box retail offering more varieties of goods, to name a few. Historically, downtowns and main streets have been the vibrant centers of many communities. However, when chain stores and strip developments are located on the fringes of a community, these areas suffer. Fueled by the automobile and convenience of the one-stop-shop, many downtowns and main streets have become less competitive for business and a lively citizen presence.

There are many good examples of small Indiana communities such as Madison, Crawfordsville, and Newburg which have revitalized their downtowns through well conceived planning programs.



### Downtown Plans

Downtown plans generally identify ways to revitalize downtowns that have suffered from population and commercial decline. They are meant to be a guide for the future. They promote smart use of existing land, identify area development needs, encourage pedestrian friendly streetscapes, analyze existing traffic and plan for future traffic, and identify methods and incentives to spur growth and revitalization.

General issue categories are usually condensed into unique goals with milestones—based on cost—to reach them (immediate, short-term, long-term). The ultimate goal of a downtown plan is to provide a lasting influence that revitalizes an area to where it becomes self-sustaining.

In addition to making recommendations for physical development, downtown plans may also include an economic analysis of the current conditions. From this they can include suggestions on how to increase the economic vitality based on community needs or how to institute promotion and marketing programs for the downtown area.

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## Main Street Programs

Most Main Street programs exist as nonprofit, single-entity organizations, or as a sub-entity of organizations that already have a vested interest in the area in which the Main Street program is to be implemented.

Main Street programs seek to revitalize downtown areas that have lost pedestrian traffic and commercial activity into the sustainable areas they once were. This established process has been distilled into four points:

1. Organization,
2. Promotion,
3. Design,
4. and Economic Restructuring.

These four points are further supported by eight principles that guide the implementation of a successful Main Street program. For more information on these principles, as well as the four points and the entire Main Street program visit <http://mainstreet.org/>.

The Main Street program is monitored by a national organization that oversees and accredits all Main Street programs. This allows for a strong network of cities with Main Street programs and provides credibility for the endeavor.

## Relevant Statutes

- Indiana Code 36-7-4-501
- IC 36-7-4-801: Improvement location permit; requirement
- IC 36-7-4-802: Improvement location permit; authority to issue
- IC 36-7-4-923: Alternate procedure of plan commission for expedient disposition of petitions; hearing officers; rules; appointment for historic area or district

## Capacity Recommendations

To start a Main Street program the official website has a detailed outline of helpful tips to follow (<http://mainstreet.org/content.aspx?page=57&section=2>). No prior level of planning capacity is required, although it is helpful.

## Guidelines / Considerations for Implementation

- For the Main Street Program, a project must meet criteria and receive accreditation from the national program in order to use the name "Main Street".

## Example Ordinances

No example ordinances are available for this tool.

## Example Studies

- **Denton, TX Downtown Master Plan:** This Downtown Plan was completed in 2003 and won a Project Planning Award from the American Planning Association in October of 2003. It focuses on streetscape design, parking issues, outdoor gathering spaces, and the downtown's different districts. <http://www.cityofdenton.com/pages/dwntwnmp.cfm?DentonDTPlan.pdf&object=2824&folderID=185&fileID=1418&action=view>
- **Crawfordsville, IN Main Street:** The website for the Main Street Program in Crawfordsville, IN includes the mission of the program, why it was started and examples of its positive results. <http://www.crawfordsvillemain-street.com/>

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- **Historic Newburgh, IN:** The non-profit corporation, Historic Newburgh Incorporated (HNI), was established to counter unemployment and preserve the downtown area. [\[http://www.historicnewburgh.org/\]](http://www.historicnewburgh.org/)
- **Mainstreet Shelbyville, IN:** This site describes the Main Street Program that was started in Shelbyville, IN. [\[http://www.mainstreetshelbyville.org/\]](http://www.mainstreetshelbyville.org/)
- **Wabash Marketplace, Inc.:** Wabash Marketplace, Inc. was created to preserve the historic nature of downtown Wabash, IN, and encourage its future success. [\[http://www.wabashmarketplace.org/\]](http://www.wabashmarketplace.org/)
- **Madison, IN:** Located on the Ohio River, Madison, IN has a well preserved downtown with many activities and businesses. This website offers information about some of their programs as well as additional services and activities the downtown has to offer. [\[http://www.oldmadison.com/\]](http://www.oldmadison.com/)

### Helpful References and Links

- **Main Street Program:** The website for the national Main Street Program, this includes all of the related information and requirements for starting a Main Street program. [\[http://mainstreet.org/\]](http://mainstreet.org/)
- **Indiana Main Street:** As a resource and partner for starting a Main Street Program in Indiana, this program offers economic revitalization and professional assistance for Indiana communities wishing to improve the traditional hub of government and commerce in downtown business districts. [\[http://www.in.gov/ocra/mainstreet.shtml\]](http://www.in.gov/ocra/mainstreet.shtml)
- **The Heart of the Community:** This site provides Minnesota Planning's guidelines for downtown planning and sustainable developments. It includes information on policy and financing assistance options. [\[http://www.moea.state.mn.us/sc/downtownplan.cfm\]](http://www.moea.state.mn.us/sc/downtownplan.cfm)

### Helpful Contacts

- **Community Based Projects (CBP)** – Ball State's premiere outreach and service program since 1969 specializing in a variety of small town issues.

Community Based Projects  
College of Architecture and Planning  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
cbp@bsu.edu  
<http://www.bsu.edu/cbp/>

- **College of Architecture and Planning: Indy Center- Ball State University** – The Mission of the Ball State University College of Architecture and Planning Indianapolis Center is to be a catalyst for recovering and redefining the experience of urban places, in order to build living cities, models for sustainable urban life.

Scott Truex: (317) 696-6170  
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Indianapolis, IN 46204  
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<http://www.bsu.edu/web/capic/index.html>

## Downtown Plan / Main Street Program

### Other Possible Funding Sources

- **Corporate sponsors** (especially those with a vested interest in downtown areas)
- **Downtown/Main Street associations**
- **Fund raising** (events, donations, etc.)
- **Improvement districts**
- **OCRA Downtown Enhancement Grant:** This grant program is designed to support innovative approaches to community planning and revitalization of small town downtowns. Funds are available up to \$20,000 for each request. For more information see the contact information below:

Jo Grandel  
(317)232-8910  
jgrandel@ocra.in.gov

### Program Objectives and Issues Addressed

- General planning
- Vision or direction for future growth
- Growth and development
- Poor visual aesthetics
- Brownfields

### See Also

- Neighborhood and Sub Area Plan
- Overlay Zones
- Brownfield/ Infill Development